How Labor Disputes Led to Violence: Personalities, Paternalism, and Power at Republic Steel in Youngstown, Ohio: 1937

Research Thesis

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Introduction

Labor and management are two sides of the same coin. Both are important cogs in the machine of American capitalism. One cannot exist without the other. A harmonious relationship between labor and management ensures maximum benefit to both sides. Labor requires the resources of ownership. Ownership relies on management to direct the use of its resources. Management, in turn, relies on labor to carry out the tasks needed to operate a business. When this relationship is harmonious all sides benefit in ways that are satisfactory to all parties. However, relations between labor and management can be tenuous. When the desires of labor and management are in conflict, the relationship can break down quickly and sometimes result in violent confrontation. Such was the case at the steel mills of the Republic Steel Corporation in and around Youngstown, Ohio in the summer of 1937. Republic's northeastern Ohio facilities were not the only locations of confrontation between labor and management, but an examination of the clash there, which left two people dead, illuminates the relationship that linked labor, management, and the local community.

Republic Steel, although a large company, was not in the top tier of steel producers in 1937. Larger companies, like the United States Steel Corporation or Bethlehem Steel, operated more facilities and were more profitable than Republic Steel. So Republic fought hard to maintain its place in the market and took any threats to its position seriously, which is why throughout the early months of 1937 Republic fended off advances by labor organizers to unionize its employees. Republic was a publicly traded company and as such had responsibilities to its shareholders but a man named Cyrus Eaton had controlling interest and he prioritized profit above all else.[1] Republic's determination to remain un-unionized added pressure to what had become a tense situation. Labor unrest was growing throughout the U.S. and Republic Steel had

experienced strikes in other cities where they operated. On the evening of June 19, 1937, during a union demonstration at one of Republic's steel mills, violence came to Youngstown, Ohio. Republic employees clashed with local police, sheriff's deputies, and company security. Fighting on that night resulted in two deaths and scores of injuries.

Since the financial success of both Republic's labor and management depended on a collegial relationship, why did they allow the situation to become so embittered that those involved would be willing to take each other's lives? Why did some people with at best a tangential interest in the outcome, such law enforcement, feel empowered to use deadly force against fellow citizens who were engaged in a financial dispute? Was Republic's leadership concerned for the welfare of its employees, who were beaten and shot, or were they indifferent so long as a docile workforce could be maintained? The answers to these questions revolve around attitudes having to do with ideology, economics, patriotism, and stewardship. Republic labor, influenced by outside unions and driven by their perception of fairness, sought changes to plant operations and wage structures. They were heartened by the labor movement that had begun to take shape in the country and felt that the summer of 1937 was the right time to make their stand. For ownership and management's part, profitability was not their only concern. They believed the survival of the business was at stake and were prepared to use their power and influence to ensure Republic Steel was not dissolved by union control of the workforce.

At the time of the strike and ensuing violence, Republic Steel and its workforce both wanted financial stability. For the workers, this meant job security along with wage stabilization and predictability. The leadership of the company felt its viability was threatened by the union's demands. Both sides believed in their positions strongly enough that neither would budge. The concerns of the workers were understandable. The country was emerging from the Great

Depression and those that were hurt the most were average Americans. Companies like Republic Steel, with resources in reserve, suffered economic damage but ultimately recovered. The employees of Republic wanted to ensure their own economic survival. Companies such as the United States Steel Corporation and Goodyear Rubber could see that unionization would come to their industries and reluctantly accepted organized labor.[2] The leadership of Republic Steel, however, was less visionary than that of its larger counterparts. The personal composition of Republic's chairman, Tom M. Girdler, caused the company to be delayed in its acceptance of union employees and allowed violent confrontation to occur as he slowly grasped what was coming to his company. Girdler was eventually called to answer for Republic's role in labor violence in front of the United States Senate.

Tom Girdler was a mechanical engineer by education but his real talent was management. His upbringing, education, training, and experience contributed to his management philosophy which has been called Girdlerism. Girdlerism was a version of paternalism that rewarded loyalty and rugged individualism and abhorred communism and unions. In addition to his managerial rigidness, Girdler sometimes fell victim to uncontrollable fits of rage that stemmed from his fear of a changing world. Raised as a person of privilege, he reacted poorly when those of lesser standing attempted to challenge his authority. When leaders of other companies either resisted or accepted unionization, their decisions were pragmatic and made in the best interests of their companies. Girdler, for the most part, was also a responsible steward but there were moments in his career in which he allowed pride, stubbornness, and rage to guide his decisions. These qualities were instrumental in causing Republic Steel to be a company that resorted to physical violence to deal with an unhappy labor force. Under the leadership of Tom Girdler, Republic

Steel resisted a unionized labor force far longer than other companies that saw the inevitability of the future.

Republic Steel was one of the so-called "Little Steel" companies. This moniker was given to secondary companies that did not command the same market share as firms like the United States Steel Corporation or Bethlehem Steel.[3] In the years just prior to 1937, labor groups at companies of various sizes began to organize as company-sanctioned unions. Some steel companies allowed their employees to organize if they did so as a company union. Company unions, which are outlawed today, were groups of workers who met under the supervision or influence of the company that employed them, often in the company's own buildings. Under this arrangement, workers were not actually free to voice disagreement with the company nor were they protected by a binding contract. These 'unions' allowed employees to feel like their concerns were being addressed while at the same time they allowed companies to exert influence and retain control over their workforces. In 1937, there was a shift in this arrangement. A new, more aggressive entity, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) began to organize workers.[4] The CIO organized outside the workplace and its membership was open to any workers who wanted to join. Company unions served a valuable role for steel companies in that they differentiated workers who were loyal to management from those who were inclined to sign with a group like the CIO. Given the economic hardships that the Great Depression levied on the working class, labor wanted to feel that its interests were being represented. The CIO offered the workers of Republic Steel this comfort. Steel companies did not care for this new model of unionization because it removed some power from management and transferred it to labor. However, the writing was on the wall and in early 1937 the United States Steel Corporation acquiesced and struck an agreement with the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), a

CIO entity. That agreement allowed SWOC to bargain on behalf of U.S. Steel's employees. This was accomplished without a strike.[5] U.S. Steel's history involved clashes with labor before 1937 and because of that experience its leadership calculated that negotiation with labor was preferable to more bloodshed. This new arrangement was problematic for companies like Republic. It created a situation that emboldened the CIO as it began to wield power. Republic Steel's management resisted the formation of a non-company union and that, in turn, led to violence.

Labor Relations and the Need for Government Regulation from the 1890's to the 1930's

To understand how violence occurred throughout the Republic Steel Corporation in 1937 it is necessary to examine U.S. labor/management relations in the preceding decades. During the late 1800's groups of employees began to agitate for better pay and working conditions. Improvement for workers would come at a cost to the companies that employed them. This cost was viewed as a threat to profitability and control. So, management hired agents who specialized in harassment of labor groups. As employees became more defiant and demanding, management turned to private security firms to quell the boldness of labor. The most famous private security organization was the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. The Pinkertons, other private security firms, and union-busting ruffians were accountable only to their customers and could operate as de facto police forces. They were free to use coercion and violence to protect management's property and business interests. Labor law was virtually non-existent before 1900 and companies took full advantage of the lack of regulation.[6]

The bravado with which companies operated at that time is exemplified by an incident that occurred at Andrew Carnegie's steel mill in Homestead, Pennsylvania on July 6th, 1892. The

Homestead confrontation began innocuously enough. Labor, represented by the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, disagreed with management over wages and control. Negotiation ensued, and an impasse was reached. During this impasse management took an aggressive stance. Instead of allowing work to continue, management locked out the workforce and stopped operations. This siege tactic was designed to demonstrate to labor that it would suffer without the benevolence of management. Henry Clay Frick, Carnegie's partner and man in charge of Homestead, planned to bring in non-union workers to re-start operations. But the workforce did something unexpected; it seized the mill. At this point, Frick summoned the Pinkertons. During the next day, July 6th, 1892, the Pinkertons fought with Homestead workers and townsfolk. The confrontation, which saw the use of firearms, pipes, railroad cars set ablaze, and even a cannon, left 10 people dead: three workers and seven Pinkertons. Eventually, the Pennsylvania National Guard was summoned to restore order. For all the trouble, though, the strikers accomplished little. The confrontation resolved none of the underlying issues and tensions remained high until November when the union relented and some workers were allowed back to work. Others were blacklisted. Carnegie won. His operations resumed and the workforce was brought to heel.[7]

The business climate in the United States continued to be unfriendly to labor after the Homestead events. The San Francisco streetcar strike of 1907 pitted United Railways against the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electrical Railway Employees of America, or the Carmen's Union. The union decided to strike when Patrick Calhoun, United Railways' president, rejected a request to raise the workers' daily wage to $3.00. Prior to the strike, Calhoun retained the services of James A. Farley. Farley owned a detective agency and was a professional strike buster. Farley contracted 400 ruffians to travel from the east coast to San Francisco to work the

jobs that the strikers left undone. They were housed in one of the railway's barns, which stored its railcars, and the union knew where they were. After waiting a day, Farley's men were ordered by Calhoun to operate six cars. They did so while costumed in United Railways uniforms like the strikers would have worn. Unlike the strikers, Farley's men went to work armed with revolvers. Once the cars left the barn, the strikers threw rocks and bricks at the vehicles. The strikebreakers responded by firing at the strikers with their weapons. The men who remained in the barn also used guns to shoot at the strikers. This event left 25 people either dying or seriously wounded.[8]

In both the Homestead and San Francisco confrontations, the companies used private muscle to try to intimidate their workforces. This intimidation was meant to demonstrate to the unions that the companies would have no aspect of the management of their businesses dictated to them. It was in management's long-term economic interest not to cave in to the desires of the union. Had management granted the wage increases to the workers, the union would have gained legitimacy. This would have been a threat to the control that management enjoyed.

At Homestead, government got involved when the National Guard arrived. The Guard attempted to be neutral, but ultimately its presence benefited the Carnegie operation. In San Francisco, government also got involved, but this time it intervened on behalf of the strikers. The local police did not like the fact that outside, private muscle came to the city and caused violence. The police arrested those strikebreakers whom they believed had fired into the crowd of strikers and insisted that, "if any strikebreakers start shooting from the cars, they will be shot in return by the police."[9] Government authority clearly played a role in these types of disputes. Both labor and management attempted to marshal the strength of government to each side. The on-the-ground government agents had no guidance as to which sides to support. Legislatures would have to get involved to provide labor and management with rules on acceptable business

practices and to provide enforcement agencies with rules of engagement if labor disputes required their intervention.

At the beginning of the 1900's the relationship between labor and management became antagonistic. Carnegie's use of the Pinkertons and United Railways' unleashing of Farley and his men were catalysts for change. Laws that governed labor/management relations and addressed wages and working conditions were considered and enacted because of incidents like Homestead and San Francisco.

In 1935, labor scored a legislative victory with the passage of the National Labor Relations Act, more commonly referred to as the Wagner Act, after Senator Robert R. Wagner. The Wagner Act guaranteed the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively, prohibited certain actions and interferences by management, and established an independent board to administer the law.[10] The Wagner Act departed from previous judicial interpretations of the Sherman Act of 1890 which sought to ensure fair competition among businesses for a given industry. The Sherman Act prohibited "…combinations or conspiracies in restraint of interstate or foreign commerce and provided for criminal prosecution, injunctions, and suits for triple damages for violations."[11] The Sherman Act was intended to protect the American economy from monopolies by ensuring that one company or trust could not become too powerful in any industry. Corporations got creative by using the Sherman Act against labor unions. They argued that because labor unions could affect the flow of interstate commerce and the rates at which that commerce could be transacted, they conspired against organic business operations and were therefore in violation of the law. The Supreme Court upheld this interpretation.[12] It appeared that workers' rights took a backseat to corporate profitability, at least in the eyes of Congress and the federal judiciary. These Sherman Act proceedings took place in the first decade of the 20th

century. Labor unions and their progressive allies struggled for the following two decades to score a major victory in their fight for rights until the passage of the Wagner Act.

Although the Wagner Act sought to protect workforces from unfair labor practices, it was only partially effective because of cultural norms. Workers feared retribution by management. Local, state, and federal authorities remained impotent in their responses to labor/management disagreements even after the Wagner Act was passed. The enforcement of the Wagner Act was ill defined and management was still allowed to wield its power unchecked. As a result, the Wagner Act would not create meaningful change until a serious situation occurred that shed light on labor conditions and brought public pressure. One such situation was the violent Republic Steel confrontation at Youngstown.

The Wagner Act was a fine law that defined conditions precisely. Its intent, as stated in the legislation's first lines, was "To diminish the causes of labor disputes burdening or obstructing interstate and foreign commerce, to create a National Labor Relations Board, and for other purposes."[13] This opening could be interpreted in a way that prioritized free-flowing commerce as the law's priority. However, the remainder of the Wagner Act enumerates rights and protections for labor such that the law can only be read as a reconciliation for the decades of abuse that American workers suffered at the hands of the United States' industrial management hegemony.

The Wagner Act stipulated that "Employees shall have the right to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing…"[13] This was the most important text within the legislation. It established that employees had rights that were protected by law. Prior to the Wagner Act, employees were

treated merely as a commodity, but with its passage, employees' wishes had to be considered by management. In addition to recognizing labor as more than a tool of management, the act also defined unfair labor practices such as interference in union activities, hiring discrimination based upon union membership, and retribution by management.

The protections afforded to labor by the Wagner Act were viewed, by management, as unwelcome intrusions by government into private enterprise. After being passed by congress with almost no opposition, (the vote was 132-45 in the House of Representatives and passed the Senate without a record vote) the National Labor Relations Act was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on July 5, 1935.[14] Some saw this as anti-American and overly patriarchal. However, because earlier attempts to codify labor/management relations were unsuccessful the Wagner Act was needed. In June of 1933, two years prior to the passage of the Wagner Act, the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA)was signed into Law. This legislation's main goal was to speed the nation's economic recovery from the Great Depression. It included a section that outlined labor's right to organize. This section, 7(a), of the NIRA was ineffective because there was no enforcement mechanism included.[15] Congress had advanced the issue of labor rights in 1933 by confronting the problem in legislation but it took the Wagner Act of 1935 to provide tangible methods by which labor could address their grievances.

The Wagner Act faced almost immediate legal challenges from private business. The new law established rights of workers and prohibitions of certain management practices, but also established a National Labor Relations Board that would act as an enforcement body to be sure that no rights were violated. Even before the board was selected and its operations organized, the American Liberty League published a report that concluded the Wagner Act was unconstitutional. The report suggested that the act overreached in the areas of interstate

commerce regulation and placed too much restriction on individual rights. The Wagner Act was under attack and its survival depended on the opinion of the Supreme Court.[16]

On April 12, 1937, the Supreme Court held that the Wagner Act was constitutional and that it provided "adequate opportunity to secure judicial protection against arbitrary action."[17] With the endorsement of the Supreme Court, American industry would feel the influence of labor through organization. Management would not stand idly by, though, and allow their control to be usurped by labor. The Wagner Act was a specific response to a widespread pattern of behavior by management who oppressed and dehumanized labor. Government intervention, through legislation, was needed to stop the brazenness with which employers treated their workforces. The events of Homestead and San Francisco and the fight to get the Wagner Act passed into law contributed to the conditions that ignited violence in Youngstown in 1937. The story of the night of June 19th, 1937 is an exposition of forces that were in opposition to each other's needs as economic actors. That night saw both sides pay heavy physical and spiritual tolls. Before one can understand the events that night, however, the character and guiding philosophy of Tom M. Girdler must be understood.

Girdlerism

To understand the violence throughout the Republic Steel Corporation in 1937 it is imperative to understand Tom Girdler. In many ways, Girdler was the embodiment of that which business and capital tried to protect. He represented strength, patriotism, and independence. Because he represented those things, he also embodied the antithesis of the union ethos which valued workers as vital and hard-to-replace partners in the success of an industry. Tom Girdler opposed the leadership of the CIO literally and figuratively. Literally in the sense that he ordered

his employees to oppose the formation of a union and figuratively in that he became a personification of the practices that SWOC and the CIO tried to defeat.

Girdler gave his autobiography an ironic title: *Boot Straps*. To pull oneself up by the boot straps implied that their road to success was within reach but required independent self-determination. In Girdler's case, this could not have been further from the truth. Two circumstances, his financial well-being while attending college and his ascendency to leadership of his father's business, show that Girdler's road to the top of industry was paved for him.

Tom Girdler attended Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania beginning in 1897. While there, his life was financed by his paternal aunt Jenny. Aunt Jenny believed education to be important and before Girdler committed himself to higher education she indicated the she would help him pay for college. Beginning that autumn, Aunt Jenny took care of all Girdler's monthly expenses. By the end of his first academic year, the number was fixed at $50.00 per month. Girdler thrived at Lehigh. He studied mechanical engineering, sang in a church choir, belonged to a fraternity, and forged strong friendships. One of his friends, Cy Roper, provided Girdler with an opportunity to live and work in London, England. He graduated in 1901, worked for Roper in England for about a year, became homesick and returned to the U.S. by March of 1902.[18] While at Lehigh, because of his talents and the benevolence of his family, Girdler achieved academically and expanded his mind through travel. One of the reasons many Americans work is to provide a materially secure life and future for themselves and their children. Tom Girdler's family, via Aunt Jenny's monthly stipend, provided this security to him. Later in his life, during his time as chairman of the Republic Steel Corporation, Girdler's employees fought for this same security and Tom Girdler stood in their way.

During the summers of his college years, Girdler worked in the family business. His father owned a cement plant that was doing well but production was not what it could be. One summer, Girdler's father fell ill and had to be convinced to take time off from running the cement factory. The treasurer of the business, Thomas Cooper, concocted a scenario in which Tom Girdler would take over the day-to-day management of the business. Girdler's father was dubious. The elder Girdler did not feel anyone was qualified to run the factory but him. Alas, needing a rest, he relented and Tom Girdler entered the world of management. Girdler described his father as a slave to duty. Tom wasn't interested in running a cement business but he revered his father and his way of life. Thus, duty compelled Girdler to take the reins of the cement plant until his father could return. Girdler worked relentlessly. During that summer, the cement plant broke records for weekly and monthly production. While other men ate lunch, he worked. When other men went home for the night, he worked.[19] In his father, Girdler saw a fiercely independent man who worked so hard that his health suffered. To Tom Girdler, this was evidence of virtue and he worked in a way that he felt honored his father's legacy. Girdler's drive may have been due to his work ethic or it may have been due to his idolization of his father. Either way, he saw himself as driven and other men as lazy. This attitude of self-righteousness dominated Girdler's interactions with labor for his entire career.

Two incidents that Girdler describes show that management's philosophy in the 1930's was less about what was best for companies and their employees, and more about creating a cult of personality that revealed the character of management. These events, combined with his belief that labor was inherently lazy, guided Girdler's business decision making and evolved into the philosophy called Girdlerism.[20]

One event that foreshadowed Girdler's stance toward labor occurred when attitude turned to action. Before running Republic Steel, Girdler spent time at various levels of management in other steel companies. One of these companies was Oliver Iron & Steel Company. Early in his career, Girdler worked as a foreman for Oliver. One day, one of Girdler's subordinates finished his work and tried to leave a few minutes early, in violation of company policy. Workers were expected to begin another task if it could be completed within a few minutes after quitting time. Many of the workers were unhappy with this rule and one man challenged it by leaving instead of starting another task. Girdler ordered the man back to his post and when he didn't go Girdler struck the man and a fight ensued. Girdler beat the man to the point of unconsciousness. After the incident, Girdler's boss was only concerned with who won the fight. Once he discovered Girdler was the victor, the losing worker was fired.[21] This incident took place in 1902. Girdler was a recent college graduate and a foreman, the lowest management position at a steel mill. He knew that letting the worker off the hook would be an affront to his authority. This knowledge combined with his inexperience probably resulted in a quicker escalation than was necessary. Girdler figured out that his place in the labor/management ecosystem would be secure if he protected the interests of capital. The man's dismissal along with Girdler's continued ascension proved he was right.

From 1905 through 1907, after his time at Oliver Iron & Steel, Girdler worked as an assistant superintendent for the Colorado Fuel, Iron, and Railroad Company.[22] C.F. & I., as Girdler called it, was a company that was headquartered in the Pueblo, Colorado. Its location was far removed from the giant steel companies of the day which call cities like Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Youngstown home. Girdler was a trained engineer, but he learned the specifics of steelmaking while at C.F. & I. The company manufactured smaller steel pieces than the

companies back east but the process, although smaller in scale, was essentially the same. Working in Pueblo allowed Girdler to hone his managerial style and strategic thinking. In *Boot Straps* Girdler lamented the cost of transporting raw materials into Pueblo but saw a great advantage in the location when C.F. & I. distributed its products because it could do so to much of the western U.S. without much competition.[23] The lessons that Girdler learned while working for C.F. & I cemented his management philosophy.

In some ways, Tom Girdler represented a changing of the guard. Until the early 20th century steelmaking was somewhat primitive. To grossly oversimplify the process, through trial and error mankind developed a procedure that heated steel's ingredients until they were liquefied, mixed together, and cooled. The result was steel. However, the process produced unpredictable results. Metallurgic techniques were introduced and improved consistency of steelmakers' products. But, like most other companies at the time, C.F. & I did not rely on science to improve their product. Rather, they depended on the experience of their labor force. But, at the turn of the century the company reconsidered its approach to the steelmaking process and hired Tom Girdler because of his engineering knowledge and ability. When Tom Girdler was hired by C.F. & I in 1905 he was a "rare specimen" because he had a technical education.[24]

As a young engineer and manager with C.F. & I, Girdler was cocksure. He didn't feel that he needed to defer to less educated but more veteran coworkers. On one occasion, he challenged his immediate supervisor's authority and questioned the man's methods. The other man had employed a technique called averaging. Averaging meant that, although the chemical composition of all the steel that was produced was unknown, the relative strength of the whole could be relied upon to meet certain strength standards. The average was established by analyzing samples at various times of the run to ascertain the chemical composition of the steel

at that moment. Those numbers were then averaged to establish the strength of the entire run of steel. Some pieces were known to be less than adequate because, by definition, some had to be below average. Therefore, some pieces were certain to fail. Prior to metallurgists being employed at steel mills this was accepted process. This wasn't good enough for Girdler. Because he was part of the vanguard of educated technicians he insisted on having a more certain chemical process in place when he made steel. Girdler brought his disagreement with his supervisor to the leadership of C.F. & I and they sided with his supervisor. They felt that Girdler should defer to seniority and not to his scientific principles. He left C.F. & I over this issue.[25] Girdler believed in his education and his own ability. Self-confidence is an admirable quality but it can also be destructive. During his time at C.F. & I Girdler's self-assurance did not allow him to take into consideration the abilities and experience of others. On one hand, his success and rapid ascension of the corporate ladder are evidence that he made the right decision in not deferring to others. On the other hand, it is possible that his rigidity in dealing with others contributed to creating a corporate culture that, eventually, deteriorated to the point of violent confrontation.

Girdlerism was characterized by intense control of labor by management through policies and practices that define the role of the worker as inferior. If labor did not try to re-define itself outside the bounds of this definition, then peace was maintained. On the other hand, when labor upset the status quo, under Girdlerism, management was required to preserve its paternal position in the business. Sometimes, this resulted in violence.

Violence that occurred at the Youngstown mill was the result of Girdlerism. When labor tried to organize, Republic allowed it to do so only through company unions. When labor persisted via SWOC, Republic locked them out and slowed or stopped production at its facilities. When labor called a strike, Republic responded violently and people were injured or killed.

Republic Steel, under the leadership of Tom Girdler did not discriminate when it chose whom to apply the principles of Girdlerism. Workers, women, and non-employees were all possible targets. On the night of June 19th, 1937 all groups were at risk.

Some believe that Girdlerism was a conscious set of policy decisions but it was not. Instead, Girdlerism was sub-conscious. Decisions were merely a consequence of Girdler being who he was raised to be. Girdler attempted to justify his philosophy by shrouding it in notions of paternalism, patriotism, and capitalism.

While working for another steel company, Jones and Loughlin, Girdler was placed in charge of a steel mill in 1914: the Aliquippa Works at Woodlawn, Pennsylvania. There he rose to the rank of Assistant General Superintendent - this was the highest position at Woodlawn.[26] Later that same year, he became head of Jones and Laughlin's company town that would eventually become Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. With Girdler as its leader, Aliquippa became "…a benevolent dictatorship."[27] He oversaw the town's private police force and installed Harry Mauk, a handpicked former Pennsylvania state trooper, to lead it. Girdler believed that his workers needed a father figure to guide them. Aliquippa, a town with all its homes owned by Jones and Loughlin and its schools run likewise, afforded Girdler the opportunity to be that father-figure and obtain control of most areas of workers' lives.[26]

Girdler's attitudes about paternalism were hardly unprecedented. The historian Eugene Genovese wrote about the same attitudes being present in American slave masters. In his book, *Roll Jordan Roll*, Genovese focused on how slaves' lives were controlled by masters who justified their treatment with religion. These masters felt as though their positions of authority were justified biblically. Part of the tactic the masters used was to create feelings of loyalty and

indebtedness in individual slaves. Genovese writes, "Wherever paternalism exists, it undermines the oppressed by linking them as individuals to their oppressors."[28] Likewise Girdler learned that the best way to deal with a workforce was 'man-to-man'.

In one passage from *Boot Straps*, Girdler described how his father dealt with unhappy workers at his cement plant. Girdler wrote, "What those men protected by staying away from work, when they had a grievance, was their dignity. I suppose his understanding of that explains why father was so quick to respond to the situations by getting in his buggy instead of on a high horse. In such situations, nobody's feelings were hurt by what was said because it was man-to-man, instead of boss-to-man as it would have been had the grievance been discussed in the mill office."[29] In the preceding quote, Girdler described the genesis of his attitudes about negotiating with workers. Although the workers in the senior Girdler's mill were unified in their unhappiness as a group, he negotiated with them individually. They came to agreements separately. Had these negotiations taken place in the mill and not at the homes of the upset men, negotiations would have been different and may have included some semblance of collective bargaining. But the elder Girdler was not constrained by law. He was free to manipulate his workers at their homes. Tom Girdler could not do this. He had to follow labor law and industry regulation. This was the condition that he resisted. Tom Girdler wanted to treat workers in the same paternalistic way and with the same impunity that his father and the slave masters who Genovese described did.

Patriotism was another value that informed Girdler's leadership. In *Boot Straps*, Girdler described how the virtues of the business community in the United States would contribute to winning World War II. He wrote, "Yet all the superb mechanisms which will enable them to conquer the enemies of the United States are the products of this country's great industrial corporations and could only have been created in such a short time by such organizations."[30] The

will of the American ideal and the determination of the United States' armed services took a backseat to industrialism in Girdler's narrative. Girdler felt a responsibility to the country to provide the military the means to defeat evil in the world. He also saw organized labor as a threat to his ability to succeed in this endeavor. At the time, the CIO was led by men with leftist leanings or were outright communists.[31] Girdler connected the idea of workers' rights to communist sympathies and the patriot in him could not let defiance to his vision of capitalism or the American way be defiled by communists. Thus, his rigid reaction to strikers in Youngstown was consistent with his belief system. *Boot Straps* was published in 1944, before both the end of World War II and the Cold War. So it can be inferred that his beliefs about communists, labor, and business were not affected by those events. Further, as one of the United States' most prominent captains of industry, Girdler was likely one of the chief architects of the nation's attitude regarding communists, labor, and business.

Girdlerism's roots are tangentially related to some capitalist business practices that prioritize profit above the well-being of workers. One of the main criticisms of capitalism is that it places too much wealth in the hands of too few people. One must be willfully self-deceptive to engineer this lack of balance into a business. Girdlerism was a tool used by those who controlled that wealth to maintain a lack of balance and it was exercised in its most perfect form by its inventor, Tom M. Girdler.

Youngstown, Niles, and Warren: Republic Steel's Ohio Battlefields in 1937

Violence came to Youngstown, Ohio on the evening of June 19th, 1937 when during a strike, union members and agents for Republic Steel fought near the grounds of Republic's facilities. This encounter was deadly and brutal; two people were killed and scores more were

hurt badly. There were several reasons why events on that day became bloody. First, the leadership of Republic Steel was determined not to bend to the will of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, acting through its steel industry organizing arm the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. Second, SWOC, was determined to organize the workers of Republic steel using the new powers granted to it by the Wagner Act. Third, local authorities were an invested third party because the events took place in their city and not just on the grounds of Republic Steel. Finally, the attitudes of those involved were rooted in their self-images as Americans. They all believed that they played legitimate roles that were essential to the functioning of the United States. Additionally, these people also believed the others were wrong, misguided, or evil.

The CIO's strike against Republic Steel that would lead to violence began on May 26th, 1937.[32] Earlier that year, the CIO sent a letter of demands that included a $5 daily minimum wage, paid vacations, a 40-hour work week with overtime pay, health and safety standards, and a process for dealing with grievances.[33] The president of Republic Steel, Tom Girdler, was dumbstruck that his workers would want improvements in any of these areas but particularly in safety. "Just ordinary carelessness, such as management has engineered out of the industry, can cause horrible accidents." Girdler went on to suggest that even though management had all but eliminated accidents there were "planned mishaps" concocted to coerce CIO membership.[34] There was, however, enough employee unrest to enable the SWOC organizing efforts to take hold but Girdler refused to acknowledge their concerns. In fact, when Girdler refused the demands of the CIO letter he did so because he believed there was a faction of workers loyal to him. A large majority of Republic's employees had joined the CIO but some did not. Girdler clung to the idea that these men were true and honorable in their intentions but those who joined the CIO were not. While pseudo-negotiations ensued, the group of workers whom Girdler

preferred met with another of the company's leaders, Charles White. Girdler claimed that, at that meeting, they stated to White, "If Girdler signs an agreement with the C.I.O., we strike!"[35] This was music to Girdler's ears. In his mind, it gave him a moral justification not to acquiesce to the demands of SWOC.

Girdler and Republic Steel could see that a strike was unavoidable, so they prepared. He anticipated violence and prior to the beginning of the strike, Girdler ordered that every plant in the Republic Steel Corporation be supplied with tear gas. By stocking the plants with tear gas, he showed his hand. Girdler meant to break the will of the strikers and was prepared to use force to do so. He wrote that he instructed his staff to avoid violence at all costs but reminded them that they had an obligation to protect Republic's property and to defend whatever workers were left inside the facilities during a strike.[36] Surely, he knew that if his men were forced to use tear gas then local authorities would arrive and work on behalf of the city's private enterprise. In Youngstown, Niles and Warren this was exactly what happened.

Prior to the strike, SWOC distributed handbills to workers as they left the plants. These papers served as recruitment tools for SWOC.[37] Newly recruited members held organizing meetings wherever they could: churches, homes, and bars.[38] Leaders were elected and pickets were organized. SWOC wanted to be sure to operate in accordance with the Wagner Act. So, in the months leading up to the strike, Lee Pressman, SWOC's lead legal counsel instructed membership to record all violations of their rights.[39]

A bit more questionable though, were the tactics the union employed once the strike was on. SWOC and its members felt they were engaged in an ideological and material war with Republic Steel. To that end, they used whatever methods they felt were necessary to advance

their cause. According to Tom Girdler, the union needed to keep men who wanted to work out of the plants. Girdler writes, "This was done by pickets carrying clubs, guns, razors, and other weapons. Very few of these pickets were Republic employees."[40] Whether Girdler's claims are accurate or not is difficult to confirm but the National Labor Relations Board did find that the union barred entry of non-union workers into the plants.[41] For the strike to work, SWOC needed Republic to feel economic pain. Their method was to cut off the plants from outside commerce and to keep production from continuing. It started to work.

As the strike began in Warren, men left at the end of their shifts with intentions to begin picketing. On their way out of the plant these workers attempted to recruit others to their cause. Standing in between them and potential recruits, however, were the plant superintendent and a couple hundred "loyal" workers and bosses armed with sledge hammers, pikes and other weapons. The superintendent shouted to them, "Come on you sons-of-bitches, we are waiting for you." Another group trying to leave the Warren facility met resistance as well and were told "You have to stay here to protect your jobs… If you go home you won't have any more jobs in this department."[42] Republic Steel was clearly willing to resort to intimidation and violence to maintain the status quo, but the CIO and its members were also prepared to dig in and resist the company's methods vigorously.

On Saturday May 30th, 1937, members of SWOC leadership in Ohio met with representatives of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Steel mills have railroad lines that run in and out of the plants. These lines bring in materials used in the steel making process and deliver the finished product. During the strike, Republic wanted to use their lines to deliver food and other supplies to workers who remained in the plants in defiance of SWOC's wishes. SWOC hoped to appeal to their fraternal brothers in the Engineers union and convince them not to make

the deliveries.[43] Their efforts appear to have been somewhat successful. In describing an exchange with the railroads Girdler wrote of the Engineers' commitments, "…we'll haul coal, iron ore, or finished steel as usual. But we won't haul munitions." Those 'munitions' included food and clothing.[44] The union needed the assistance of the Engineers because they could not hope to stop a locomotive that wanted entry into the plant. Mail trucks, on the other hand, could not get past the humanity that made up the picket lines around Ohio's Republic facilities. Republic authorities attempted to mail food into the plants from Cleveland but once the union figured out that tactic they stopped the mail trucks.[43] With the situation becoming desperate, Republic devised an ingenious solution to defeat the SWOC siege.

Tom Girdler was an engineer by training and he attacked the problem of the union siege of Republic's plants as one. Girdler examined all resources available to Republic, assessed the probability of success of each choice, determined the material cost and the cost to Republic's reputation, and then decided on a course of action. The Niles plant was in dire straits. Girdler's leadership team considered driving food to the plant but that idea was quickly abandoned because a "mob" controlled all roads around the facility. They thought about using trains and mail but those methods had already been thwarted in other attempts. One strategy considered was to use a tank to take food to the plant. Republic had a tank because they had been contracted to provide steel armor and needed to be able to test the steel on a working model. This idea was also rejected because the Republic men decided that it would lead to bloodshed. In the end, they decided to use airplanes.[45]

Several Republic employees owned airplanes and they, along with private contractors, were mobilized to drop food into the plants. The plant at Niles was the site of the first attempt. The first drop missed the mark and the picketers ended up with the supplies that were intended

for the workers in the plant. After that, though, the remaining drops were successful and the workers had food and other domestic supplies. Within a few days, some men inside the Niles plant were able to fashion a makeshift runway (steel mills are necessarily long facilities) and men and supplies were brought in and out of the plant, albeit at high financial cost and some personal risk. The corporation was not the only organization smart enough to use planes. The union used them as well to perform reconnaissance. The CIO needed to know what work was still being performed inside the plants and they used planes to circle the facilities and collect information.[43] [45] The airplane strategy worked but it was not a long-term solution. Steel making supplies could not get into the plants and product could not get out. Both sides were dug-in; something had to give.

During the 1930's, management wielded power in several ways. The areas affected by this were working conditions, quality of facilities and tools, distribution of hours, and pay rates. Management can use any of these to punish or reward workers. Workers had less leverage when disagreements with management arose. Their most powerful economic weapon was work stoppage, or strike. Strikes were designed to put economic and social pressure onto management so that they would be forced into granting workers' demands. Because the steel industry was so ingrained into everyday life in the greater Youngstown area in 1937, the strike brought pressure to bear not just on Republic management but also on Republic workers, government, and local business too.

Republic workers on both sides of the strike began to feel pressure mounting on them from various sources. Men and women inside the plant received communication from without urging them to return home. One communication, sent via telegram, was threatening in its tone. "COME HOME AT ONCE OR IT WILL BE TOO BAD FOR YOU"[46] This telegram was to a

Mrs. Lena Rugi from George Rugi. The only additional details included in the Rugi communication were that it was sent to Mrs. Rugi in the Republic Steel tin house sorting room. This detail, seemingly minor, provides insight to how the plant and strike worked. Because of her presence in the tin house sorting room it suggests that women were involved in the steel making process. That Mrs. Rugi continued her work once the strike began also suggests the either she did not believe in the strike or she was coerced into remaining in the plant once the strike had begun. George Rugi's demand that Mrs. Rugi come home 'at once' indicated that the SWOC pickets were selectively permeable. Workers could flow in one direction: out. Those trying to enter the plant, however, met heavy union resistance. George Rugi threatened Lena Rugi but that wasn't the only tactic used by people outside the plant who were trying to convince those inside to leave.

During the strike, Mary Kozak received the following message via telegram: "MOTHER HAS NERVOUS BREAKDOWN HAVENT YOU MADE ENOUGH TROUBLE COME HOME NO ONE WILL HURT YOU WHEN YOU COME OUT IF YOU DON'T COME HOME DON'T BOTHER TO COME HOME AT ALL THINK THIS OVER MOTHER KEEPS ASKING FOR YOU= JULIA"[47] This telegram contained some amount of threat to Mary Kozak but the main pressure applied was emotional. The author, Julia, tried to invoke the strain that the strike was putting onto Mary's mother. It was so stressful that Mary's mother suffered a nervous breakdown. Family pressure can be overwhelming. In this case, Julia was appealing to Mary's love and devotion for her mother. Julia hoped that the report of the mother's condition would be enough to cause Mary to set her beliefs regarding the strike aside and return home. The Little Steel strike, from its early stages, placed a strain on families. The issues surrounding the strike exerted pressure on the belief systems of workers and their families long before the strike was

called. The potential consequences were also weighing heavily. Otherwise, the potential estrangement of Mary Kozak's family would not have been possible.

Another telegram sent to a Republic Steel worker exemplified the amount of pressure those inside the plant were under to leave. This telegram was sent to a man, named John T. Kuthta from a woman, presumably his wife, Mrs. John T. Kuchta. Although the spelling of their last names in the correspondence was different, their relationship could not have been portrayed as more intimate. The text of the telegram that Mr. Kuthta received read, "BABY VERY SICK WANTED AT HOME AT ONCE."[48] The brevity and intensity of this message indicated that Mr. Kuthta was at best a loving father and at worst a responsible patriarch. In either case, the pressure of a family member in distress was presumed to be able to be sufficient reason to motivate Mr. Kuthta's return home.

The central question pertaining to the above telegrams is this: Are they genuine? At the outset of the Little Steel Strike, the CIO and SWOC used several tactics to stop production at Republic's mills. Some of these tactics involved preventing steelmaking supplies from reaching the facilities. These tactics deprived the company of its ability to continue operations by denying it the material needed to continue work. Men and women remaining in the plants could not leave and expect to return. Therefore, to continue to do their jobs they had to stay. This required that food, clothing, and other necessities to life would have to be brought to them. The strikers did not want production to continue, so they employed siege tactics. The CIO believed that starving those inside the plants was an acceptable strategy. If starving others was deemed acceptable then familial pressure was certainly justifiable as well. The first indication that these telegrams were not genuine was the authors. They were close to the workers to whom they were writing. They certainly knew each other's feelings about Republic's relations with its workers. Why did those

feelings change suddenly? Adding to the suspicious nature of the telegrams origins was their timing. These telegrams made it into the plants several days after the beginning of the strike. If the family members felt strongly about the strike, then their loved ones would likely not have taken part in the first place. It is plausible that the contentiousness of the strike changed the minds of worker's families but it is also plausible that the telegrams sent into Republic's facilities were coerced by the CIO and SWOC.

While employees faced pressure to leave the plant and return home, they also received support from some outside the Republic family. Opposition to the CIO was high in the 1930's. The CIO was seen as a communist organization and those committed to capitalism wanted to see the CIO fail in its endeavors. With this attitude present in American business at the time, other companies were not shy about voicing their displeasure with the rise of labor organizations and their support for those who also opposed groups like the CIO.

On June 14th, 1937, Robert J Barber, the General Secretary of the Delco Remy Employee's Association penned a letter to the employees of Republic Steel who remained at their jobs. Delco Remy was a company that manufactured electronic automotive components. Barber compared the situation that the Republic workers were in to a situation that the Delco Remy company dealt with earlier. He wrote, "We have done battle with the C. I. O. in Anderson (Indiana) and have thus far kept them on the bottom. It is our intention to fight this un-American labor system with all the courage and resources at our command. We are confident that steel men will never give up. We feel certain that your part of this fight will be carried on with the greatest credit to yourselves." Barber begins his letter with platitudes describing the nobility of the American worker and the moral imperative of American industrial success. Barber characterized the Republic Steel loyalist employees as a bulwark against the creep of what he called "Radical

Agitation." Barber also suggested that the CIO's goal was the "Check Off", a method of collecting union dues directly from a worker's paycheck. He claimed that once a union was established in a business and collective bargaining was the rule, workers had to participate in automatic collection without their consent or risk losing their jobs. Barber also encouraged Republic loyalists not to fall victim to this tactic and promised that his organization would hold the line against the CIO in Indiana.[49] Barber was representative of one side of the labor/management divide. In his view, American business and society could only succeed if labor remained non-union. He also saw strikes as the battlegrounds of this ideological contest and workers were the foot soldiers. By attempting to find common cause with Republic workers he not only represented his views but he also provided men like Tom Girdler rhetorical ammunition which they could use to maintain control of their own workforces. During the beginning of the Little Steel strike, Republic's workers, loyal and otherwise, were under immense ideological pressure, but they were not the only players being pushed and pulled.

Members of local, state, and federal governments all dealt with pressure from their constituents. The closer to Republic's facilities that officials were the more intense the pressure to act.

Echoing the rhetoric of captains of industry and Republic's leadership, a group of employees who remained in Republic's Warren facility wrote a letter addressed "To the Citizens of Warren", to be published in the local paper, the *Tribune Chronicle*. In the letter, the employees draw a line of distinction between themselves and other employees who wanted to strike. These employees had no quarrel with the unionist employees but say that they wanted to work and have their wishes respected. In the letter, they listed their grievances which include the inability to leave the plant, having their mail and supply of food stopped and, the inaction of the

sheriff and mayor of Warren. At the end of the letter, the employees suggest that if their rights were not protected by the sheriff and mayor, then the citizens of Warren should "rise up and demand that we get protection of our rights as American citizens and that this CIO siege be brought to an end." By invoking local officials, Republic's workers have shifted some of the pressure from those involved directly in the strike and placed it onto close, interested parties. With this invocation, they transformed the matter from a private dispute to a public concern and caused local authorities to begin picking sides.[50]

As the strike continued, politicians from outside the local sphere of influence became involved. This was, after all, a major dispute between two forces that controlled one of the United States' most important industries. All politics may be local but, as it dragged on, the Little Steel strike captured decision makers from broader levels of government. In 1937, the CIO wanted intervention from the state to secure order in the strike. Surprisingly, they wanted that intervention to come in the form of the Ohio National Guard.[51] Ohio's governor at the time, Martin Davey, had the power to mobilize the guard. And so, he did, but not to the benefit of the CIO. In a telegram sent to Governor Davey, an employee committee of non-striking Republic workers expressed thanks to him for dispatching the O.N.G (Ohio National Guard) to make it safe for them to go to work.[52]

Another somewhat small piece of evidence conveys the grand reach the Youngstown incident had. U.S. Senator H. Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, a member of the senate appropriations committee wrote to Mrs. C. T. Schwab of Warren, Ohio. In his letter, Senator Bridges thanks Mrs. Schwab for her interest in the resolution of an investigation dealing with the stoppage of mail into Republic's facilities. Senator Bridges also asks for any other information that may help his investigation. The Republic strike touched almost all parts of the lives of the

people of Youngstown and its surrounding communities. It engaged local law enforcement, state administrators and the United States Senate. This was all before there was any physical confrontation. With so many interested parties, the heat was getting turned up and the situation approached a boiling point.

That heat also affected local media and businesses. Newspapers had the unenviable task of covering a dispute that involved business and citizens in their communities and spilled into surrounding neighborhoods. The Little Steel strike ignited the passions of members of both the company and the union involved. The actions resulting from these passions would ultimately result in the loss of ratings and subscriptions for media who covered the strike.

To some degree, newspapers covering the strike in Youngstown became part of the story. Their reporting left a sour taste in the mouths of the people they were covering. On June 1, 1937, the *Warren Tribune Chronicle* wrote a letter to Frank Flynn. Mr. Flynn was the General Manager of the Republic district that contained the plants at Warren, Niles, and Youngstown. The letter was in response to the actions and attitudes of a committee that represented some of the men left working inside Republic's plants and their wives. They were dissatisfied with the *Tribune Chronicle's* converge of the strike. The men and their wives were unhappy that their side of the story had not been reported by the paper. These families stated that they were happy with Republic Steel and upset that no one from the paper spoke to them or represented their position. The paper countered that it printed statements and news that were the result of reporting that used Republic management as its sources. The did not, however, get statements from those inside the facilities because of the physical challenges to doing so. The paper also stated that they attempted to telephone the men inside but the lines were constantly busy and suggested that they would be happy to print the men's version if they would contact the writers.[53] Once a newspaper

has attempted to contact sources and been unsuccessful, it is under no ethical directive to hold a story. The fact that the *Warren Tribune Chronicle* responded to the complaints of the subjects of one of its stories directly was not insignificant. Perhaps, the paper felt that in needed to be attentive to the complaints of the men in the plant to retain readership. It is also possible that the leadership of the paper felt a moral need to explain their reporting choices to the men. Or, possibly, they thought that continued contact was their journalistic responsibility. All the preceding possibilities for why the paper felt the need to contact Republic are reasonable. However, the fact that the *Tribune Chronicle* wrote directly to the upper management of Republic to address the concerns of some of its readers who happened to be the subjects of one of its stories speaks to the influence that Republic had in Youngstown in 1937. The *Tribune Chronicle* did not want to step too far out of bounds as far as Republic's response was concerned and that calls into question the honesty of its reporting. The *Tribune Chronicle,* almost certainly, did not want a conflict that would influence their operations to be present in their backyard. But, because it happened, the Little Steel strike made the paper a participant instead of an objective observer.

Interest in the strike was not limited to Youngstown. KDKA, the venerable radio station which broadcast from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania felt the wrath of those who were unhappy with its coverage. The same employee committee that was unhappy with the Tribune Chronicle also took issue with KDKA. The committee felt that KDKA underrepresented the number of workers still at their posts. They voiced their displeasure to KDKA via telegram. In the communication, the employee committee issued a veiled threat that they would boycott KDKA's advertisers if there was not a correction broadcast as to the number of people still at work.[54] The employee committee was clearly frustrated with how their predicament was being portrayed in the press.

Even though the plants were under siege and supplies were short, the employee committee appeared to have access to quite a bit of outside information. But, like the telegrams sent into the men from outside the plant, the communications coming from inside must also be viewed with a skeptical eye. Certainly, if the public heard directly from the men inside the plants and their families then the cause of Republic would be received more hospitably than if a corporation voiced its displeasure. One must consider if the communications to and from the workers in the plant was being encouraged by the company or the union. If this were the case, then those entities possessed a powerful grassroots method of influencing the media to cover their position more favorably.

Robert Boyle was an Irish Scientist who, during the seventeenth century, demonstrated what would become Boyle's law. Boyle, in a series of experiments, observed that the relationship between gasses, temperature, and volume could be volatile. When carried to its logical conclusion, if either the temperature or the pressure of the gas was increased too greatly the inevitable result was an explosion. This is an apt analogy to what happened at Republic Steel in 1937. The CIO and Republic both applied pressure to Republic's workers and to the communities where Republic operated. The rhetorical and class-based levers that the groups pulled to manipulate workers stoked the flames of an already burning proverbial fire. The laws that govern the natural world proved to be applicable to labor/management relations. The inevitable confrontation among interested parties in Youngstown was about to explode, it only needed a, final, small amount of pressure to be applied. It was applied on an otherwise quiet Saturday night.

The strike languished for another couple of weeks into the middle of June 1937. During this time, Republic tried to marshal support from local law enforcement agencies in cities where

the strike was held. On June 15th, Girdler distributed a statement to employees that, in part, read, "Employees kept from their jobs by mobs of armed pickets many of whom have never worked for Republic and citizens outraged by this defiance of law and decency by the C.I.O. are joining together to insist that law enforcement agencies compel the union to cease unlawful picketing."[55] While Girdler's statement reassured employees not involved, it also called for those employees to pressure local authority. Girdler tried to start a grassroots campaign to benefit one of America's most prosperous companies. He wanted those on the sidelines to agitate for local police and sheriff's departments to enter the fray on the side of Republic Steel. Determining if his efforts worked requires more examination, but when fighting broke out in Youngstown the police and sheriff's deputies who were involved protected Republic's interests as best they could.

There were only a few points of ingress and egress at Republic's Youngstown mill. Because of this, it was easy for strikers to slow or stop the flow of people into and out of the mill. One of these points was "Stop 5." On the evening of June 19, 1937 SWOC continued its round-the-clock picketing at Republic's Youngstown mill. There was a difference on this Saturday evening. The Saturday strike was designated as "women's day", a day when the main body of picketers were women. For one reason or another, the female picketers became targets of the police. Girdlers public statements and pressure from non-union Republic employees appeared to convince local law enforcement to take the company's side.

John Bogovich and James Eperjesi were killed during fighting outside the Republic Steel Plant in Youngstown on June 19th and the early morning hours of June 20th during the women's day incident.[56] [57] Various accounts of the fight say that anywhere from 26 to nearly 60 people were wounded by gun fire while dozens more suffered the effects of tear gas.[58] [59] The community would be changed by this incident and divisions between labor and management

were deepened. Along with individuals who participated in the fighting, bystanders saw parts of their city damaged by the disagreements of labor and management. The costs of these types of confrontations are materially high but the cost in human life and peace of mind are even higher. The lives of those involved and their loved ones would forever be changed.

Accounts of the events vary and the genesis of fighting is unclear. There is, however, no shortage of stories that assign responsibility. One account, housed at The Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor in a collection of private papers, purportedly from an eyewitness, suggested that the Youngstown police were at fault for starting things. The eyewitness described a scene in which the female picketers arranged themselves to have their picture taken. One of the women had a camera and while the others were seated on folding chairs, a Youngstown police officer snatched the camera from the would-be photographer's hands. Upon seeing this, the husband of the camera owner, who was nearby, tried to wrestle the camera away from the police officer. Things escalated quickly, and police lost control of themselves and the situation. In contrast to others, this account stated that the police opened fire with bullets as well as tear gas.[60] This account clearly placed the blame for the beginning of the battle with the authorities. It described the police as a group of people who were itching for confrontation. The account was sympathetic to SWOC and its strikers and saw their tactics as just.

Others saw the beginning of the encounter at Stop 5 somewhat differently. Newspaper reporting of the event varied from paper to paper. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* was the largest daily paper in the immediate vicinity of Youngstown. Its reporting of the beginning of the battle indicated that the women failed to follow police instruction to move away from Republic property. The reporting in the *Plain Dealer* also named the group of female protesters. They were called the CIO Women's League and protested the activities of those who wanted to return

to work. Because of their refusal to leave, the police used three shells of tear gas. The crowd then dispersed, reorganized and marched on police. Implied in the *Plain Dealer's* reporting was the guilt of the protesters for causing the melee.[56] The language used in the *Plain Dealer* article portrayed the strikers as wild and uncontrollable. It mentioned no gunfire on the part of the police and was specific about the number of tear gas shells fired. The mood of the article painted authorities as the 'good-guys' and the union as the 'bad-guys'.

Likewise, when the *Chicago Daily Tribune* summed up the events of the evening, seven days later, its reporting cast the strikers into an unfavorable light. The *Tribune* called the strikers "a wild throng of enraged pickets." The article did not give any indication as to why the strikers might have been enraged. This article also called the CIO an "all-powerful labor dictatorship."[61] This language was evocative of the accusations that the CIO was a communist organization. Rather than reporting the facts of the Youngstown strike scene, the *Tribune* article attempts to sway public opinion toward sympathy for Republic Steel, authority, and the economic status-quo.

The chairman of the board of Republic Steel was the most extreme in blaming the CIO and SWOC for the outbreak of violence. In his autobiography, *Boot Straps*, Tom Girdler recounted the events that started the strike. "As for the women, they were anything but peaceful. They were, in fact, the same truculent, foul-mouthed type that Communist strategists have used repeatedly to provoke a riot brawl with policemen. And this riot was provoked. It had been planned."[62] Girdler, although not present for the encounter between the police and the female strikers, went on to describe it in exhaustive detail. He claimed that the women would not follow police instruction, spat upon the police and cursed them, sometimes in a foreign language. Girdler also wrote about the women being seated on folding chairs and boxes. Supposedly, if

picketers were not walking they were in violation of local ordinances. He claimed that by sitting, the women tried to incite the police. Girdler emphasized that the women picketed on Republic property and painted them as antagonistic toward the police. In addition to besmirching the character of the women, Girdler's suggested that some men, outside agitators in his estimation, waited just beyond the vicinity of the female picketers so they could attack when the police interfered with the women. Tom Girdler described the Stop 5 incident as a coordinated tactical plot designed by SWOC, the CIO, and communists. In his mind, they used underhanded tricks such as gender baiting and provocation to pull the police into a confrontation they hoped to avoid. Girdler's narrative and motivation must be met with some skepticism. His methods as a manager would have been seriously undermined by a successful strike and the union began to outflank him. Production slowed and local support, which Girdler needed to get the strikers back to work as soon as possible, was neither for nor against Republic. A confrontation that could be framed as being the fault of the union was advantageous to Girdler and Republic Steel.

A final depiction of the Stop 5 events was presented by Donald Sofchalk in his dissertation which examined the Little Steel Strike. Sofchalk began his discussion of the Stop 5 incident by giving a detailed description of the terrain involved. Stop 5 was essentially a bottleneck or choke point into and out of the mill. Either side of the road at Stop 5 was bounded by a river or a railroad embankment. This arrangement created an area that was narrow and could easily be controlled be a force that occupied the high ground of the railroad embankment. To get into the mill a person or vehicle had to go through an underpass. According to Sofchalk, the women organized themselves and their chairs on the sidewalks and the driveway near the underpass. One issue with the protests on June 19th was that the women sat in chairs and were not walking. For some reason or another, this amounted to provocation in the eyes of the police. A

police officer, who had been involved in other Youngstown riots, informed the women that they were obstructing traffic and that the picket line must be moving, and they could not be seated. He gave them five minutes to correct themselves and when they didn't move quickly enough the officer discharged two or three tear gas grenades near the picketing. After this, confusion reigned and a full-blown riot began.[63] As the evening unfolded, people, including observers, were injured and property was damaged. 59 people required emergency medical attention. Eight policemen or deputies were hurt and three of whom were shot. Ed Salt, a photographer for the Youngstown Vindicator was wounded in the crossfire of the fighting. Along with losses to Republic Steel property, police vehicles and private property in the surrounding area were damaged.[64] For several hours chaos reigned in Youngstown and because events were hectic recollections of the evening remain in disagreement. Of the accounts that describe the outbreak of violence at Republic's Youngstown steel mill on June 19, 1937, Sofchalk's was the closest to impartial reporting. The violence that erupted that evening was caused by reasons that remain in dispute but some events that occurred later that night are certain and resulted in the deaths of two people.

John Bogovich and James Eperjesi were both shot to death during the June 19th riot. Bogovich and Eperjesi were steelworkers, European immigrants, and strikers. They worked for Youngstown Sheet and Tube which was another steel company involved in the Little Steel strike.[58] The fact that they were not employed by Republic Steel but were present at the incident between strikers and Republic is evidence that SWOC's organization and the fraternal ties among workers were strong assets to the resistance in Youngstown. That resistance was opposed by the will of Republic Steel and local law enforcement in Youngstown. It is undetermined which side fired the shots that killed Bogovich and Eperjesi. Like the Stop 5 events that led to

riot, the identities of Bogovich's and Eperjesi's killers as well as the remainder of the night are obscured by competing versions of the truth.

After the initial events at Stop 5, all those involved agreed that things escalated quickly but that is the limit to their agreement. Eyewitness testimony that appears favorable to the union claims that machine gun fire erupted from the "overhead cranes in the old tube mill."[60] This version leaves no doubt that shots were fired from inside Republic facilities. Girdler's version contradicts this claim. He writes, "I am satisfied that no shots were fired by any of the more than 800 men in our plant. They were mad that night. They wanted to go out and go after the rioters. But all such talk was discouraged and kept under control."[65] The preceding Girdler quote is illuminating. Not only did it justify the behavior of his company by absolving it of any wrongdoing, it did so in a way that made Girdler appear to be in total control. When he said that he was 'satisfied', Girdler indicated that the he was the ultimate authority who arbitrated right and wrong in the Republic Steel universe. Further, Girdler's words betrayed his attitude toward his employees. He portrayed them as people of lesser emotional control who needed to be restrained. If this is what he thought of employees loyal to Republic during the strike, he must have believed worse about the strikers.

John Bogovich was not initially involved with the strike on June 19th. After hearing about what was unfolding at the mill, Bogovich, like many other union members, rushed to the scene. It is undetermined who fired the bullet that killed Bogovich but the anti-union forces seemed to be using tactical methods of positioning and illumination that enhanced their effectiveness in the fight. According to an interview of striker Fred A. Fortunado, conducted by Philip Bracy of Youngstown State University's Oral History program, shooters inside the Republic mill opened fire when flares were sent up into the air. The flares illuminated the scene and allowed gunmen

to fire more accurately.[66] It was during one of these illuminated moments that Bogovich was shot. Whether the fatal shot came from the police, a Republic agent, or a union member, Bogovich was shot from distance.

In contrast, James Eperjesi was killed by an up-close shotgun blast. Like Bogovich, Eperjesi's killer is unknown. Physical evidence suggests that the fatal shot came from the direction of the plant or the railroad embankment. Both were sites occupied by anti-union forces. A witness claimed that Eperjesi was shot by sheriff's deputies from the back of a truck nearby. Eperjesi was killed while he ran for cover.[58]

Like Girdler, steel workers' organizations maintained a position of moral self-righteousness with respect to the events of June 19th, 1937 in Youngstown, Ohio. The Amalgamated Association of Iron Steel and Tin Workers published their own newspaper, the *Amalgamated Journal*. The *Amalgamated Journal's* publishing schedule was more sporadic than a traditional newspaper's. It was printed either weekly or bi-weekly, sometimes more, sometimes less. On July 1st, 1937, roughly two weeks after the deaths of Bogovich and Eperjesi, the *Journal* published an article that amounted to a status report of the situation in the Youngstown area. The article, titled "Warren-Niles Strike Situation" extoled the virtues of the strikers, the CIO, and supporters of the strike. It described the status of the strike and pickets as unwavering. There was a description of a kitchen that the CIO organized. It was supplied by donations from locals. This supposedly demonstrated widespread local support for the cause of the striking members of Republic Steel. The reported purpose of the kitchen was to feed the families of the strikers. The article did not report that it was also a propaganda device used by the union to gain and maintain support. That same article opened, "On Monday of last week, National Guardsmen were sent into this strike area to maintain status quo until the Strike Mediation Board had brought about the

settlement of the strike. At least that was what strikers were told by one Governor Davey, (he who was elected largely on his campaign cry of, "I never called out the militia to break a strike"). However, before the soldiers had been in Warren and Niles 24 hours, Gov. Davey broke his word by throwing the mills wide open."[67] The brothers of the CIO, SWOC, and now the Amalgamated Workers felt the it was them against the proverbial world. That world included corporate interest, and the state. Framed this way, the union could convince its membership and supporters that their fight was against evil forces and not an economic philosophy. They believed theirs was the morally correct position and the memories of Bogovich and Eperjesi were used as rallying cries to strengthen the union's resolve in the minds of the strikers and to justify the ongoing strike in the larger national labor movement.

Most accounts of the deaths of John Bogovich and James Eperjesi ran counter to Girdler's claim that no shots were fired by any of his men and Girdler's abdication of any Republic responsibility was an exercise intended to salvage both the reputations of himself and his company. The union, on the other hand, tried to use the deaths as a source of inspiration. At Bogovich's funeral a SWOC organizer named John Stephens said, "Tom Girdler and Frank Purnell are responsible for the death of this man, but his life has not been taken in vain. The cornerstone of the union has been cemented in his death."[68] The deaths of Bogovich and Eperjesi as well as the events of July 19th did little to change the attitudes of SWOC, the CIO, and Republic Steel toward each other. The strike languished and after August 1937 some workers were allowed to return to Republic factories and others were not. Antagonistic behavior and attitudes between both sides remained and eventually the Supreme Court decided that labor unions were legitimate and that agreements between them and companies must be written contracts. In the case of companies like Republic that contributed to the war effort, certification

of the contracts had to be made by the National War Labor Board. Finally, in the late summer of 1942 Republic and the CIO met the requirements for certification and a contract was signed.[69] [70]

Aftermath

In the weeks, months, and years that followed the Stop 5 incident both sides claimed victory but, as is usually the case, there was no clear winner in disputes between labor and management. This held true in the battle between Republic steel and the CIO. The responsibility for the deaths of John Bogovich and James Eperjesi belonged to someone but the ambiguity of legal settlement obscured the truth. The federal government also tried to sort out the rights and wrongs of the Little Steel strike in both Ohio and beyond the borders of the state. In October of 1938, the National Labor Relations Board ruled in favor of SWOC and against Republic Steel on the question of whether Republic engaged in unfair labor practices. Likewise, the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor took on an investigation of, among other labor incidents, the Republic Steel Youngstown Riot. This committee, led by Senator Robert La Follette of Wisconsin, was tasked with exploring the state of labor/management relations in various industries. The transcripts of the hearing associated with the Republic Steel portion of the investigation are instructive as to the attitudes of the parties involved and reveal conditions that allowed for tensions between SWOC and Republic to become untenable.

One way to measure culpability is through financial sanctions placed upon the guilty party. In *Boot Straps*, Tom Girdler wrote, "Yet the persons who were wounded were for the most part people who got caught in the reckless cross firing of the rioters."[65] Girdler assigned blame for the deaths of Bogovich and Eperjesi to the group which they were a part of: the picketers. It remains possible that the hectic nature of the riot created a set of conditions that allowed for the men to be killed by friendly fire. If this were the case, then the behavior of Republic Steel, in

dealing with the Bogovich and Eperjesi families was puzzling. In 1944 Republic paid the estates of Bogovich and Eperjesi $4500 and $1005.25 respectively. This fact alone does not prove that Republic was guilty of the killings of Bogovich and Eperjesi. Given the tenor of Girdler's public persona and his defiance of criticism in Boot Straps it defies rationality that he would have willingly allowed that money to be paid unless he felt Republic's fate was already sealed before seeing the inside of a courtroom. Paying the money may have been a tactical decision, if not an admission of guilt. The estates of Bogovich and Eperjesi were not the only bodies that wanted resolution. In the years after the Stop 5 riot the U.S. Senate would also demand details from Republic Steel in the form of testimony in front of senator Robert La Follette's sub-committee who investigated violations of free speech and rights of labor by Tom Girdler and others.

Beginning in 1936 and ending in 1940, the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor held hearings to investigate these issues. The committee was chaired by Senator Robert La Follette of Wisconsin and operated during a time of depression recovery and New Deal policies. As such, the political winds of change were blowing and management of American industries were no longer able to operate in a status quo manner without drawing skepticism. The nation's economic recovery required change and so did the relationship between labor and management.

In the case of Republic Steel, change did not come easily. Tom Girdler had won success for himself and Republic Steel by following his philosophical North Star: management control. Management needed to make crucial decisions without resistance from labor for Girdler's style to be effective. When La Follettes's committee sought to understand management's attitude toward labor they did not need to look further than Tom Girdler.

At the heart of the La Follette committee's inquiry into labor and free speech was the attitude of management toward labor. All behavior of the two parties grew from their relative ability to tolerate and respect each other. When the Senate Committee on Education and Labor pointed their focus at Republic Steel, the attitude of management, particularly Tom Girdler's attitude toward his workforce would be central to their assessment of labor practices in the steel industry.

Toward the end of *Boot Straps*, Girdler indulges, for several pages, in appraisal of the steel industry. Describing the influence that unions had on the industry He wrote, "A terribly *disorganizing* influence is at work at the base of all industry in America. The boss is no longer the boss. Because organization is my forte this aspect of intrusion of an outside influence horrifies me, as a physician is horrified when he finds a cancer has developed in the person of someone he loves."[71] Paternalistic to a fault, Girdler equated the steel industry, or rather, the management of the steel industry, to a loved one and unions and worker organization to cancer. He could not have used terms that appealed to the emotions of his readers more. Not only did he liken unions to disease but Girdler also compared them to what was at the time a disease from which patients had no hope of recovery.

Senate resolution 266 of the seventy-fourth congress states that La Follette's committee was tasked with recommending remedial legislation to the U.S. Senate that might have been necessary because of any "violations of the rights of free speech and assembly and undue interference with the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively."[72] To be able to determine whether or not to recommend legislation, the committee needed to determine if labor had been treated inappropriately in a number of industries. To do this, La Follette and the other senators, received testimony from many interested parties. They heard from workers, police and

captains of industry. One piece of testimony was especially helpful to the committee, if not to the witness. It was the testimony belonging to Tom M. Girdler.

Girdler was of special interest to the La Follette committee because he represented a past that the nation was trying to move away from and a future that it was hesitant to accept. Girdler did not shy from using strong-arm tactics. Unions and individuals alike experienced this side of Girdlers personality. One aspect of the La Follette committee's task was punitive. The actions that wayward businesses took regarding their employees had to be corrected. But, Tom Girdler embodied something more concerning to the government. In Girdler, La Follette saw a man powerful enough to carry the backward-looking methods of men like Carnegie and Frick forward. Labor was ready to sacrifice industry-wide economic prosperity to take power and influence from men like Girdler. This was a threat to national prosperity as well. So, the La Follette committee could not only be punitive, it had to be predictive as well. Tom Girdler's reverence for the ways of the past combined with his abilities as an innovator led the committee to believe that events at his company were a harbinger of things to come if the government remained uninvolved in labor/management relations.

Girdler's testimony combined with official company records and his own boasting painted a picture of Girdler's management style that was indicative of a culture of manipulation and abuse. The La Follette committee had established a procedure for the questioning of witnesses during its hearings. One of the conventions of the committee's method was to allow witnesses to make statements but only after senators had asked all their questions. Tom Girdler was one of the later witnesses and had to be subpoenaed to compel him to testify. Once in front of the committee, Girdler attempted to circumvent the established procedures and read his statement before questioning.[73] As chairman, La Follette didn't allow Girdler to do this but it

established him, from the outset of his testimony, as witness who attempted to manipulate the session to his advantage. This, combined with the need to subpoena him showed Girdler to be resistant to the efforts of the committee to reveal the rights and wrongs of labor/management relations at Republic Steel.

The events at the opening of Girdlers testimony presented Girdler as evasive but the back and forth of the committee's questions and Girdler's answers showed him to be a shrewd and somewhat dishonest executive. When Republic Steel was formed, it was a product of the combination of several other companies that were merged. One of the companies added to the Republic Steel portfolio was Donner Steel, from Buffalo, New York. One example of Girdler's flexible relationship with the truth is contained in the passage from the senate committee below:

> Senator La Follette. To refresh your recollection, Mr. Girdler, were you ever connected in any way with Donner Steel?
>
> Mr. Girdler. No.
>
> Senator La Follette. I offer for the record, for the purpose of questioning you concerning it, an excerpt from pages 21095 and 21096 of the transcript of the testimony of Mr. W. R. Burwell at the Securities and Exchange Commission investigation of Continental Shares in January 1938.
>
> (The document was marked "Exhibit 5200" and appears in the appendix on p. 13893)
>
> Senator La Follette. Mr. Burwell was the president of Continental Shares from the time of its formation in 1926 until 1932. The excerpt reads as follows:
>
> *Mr. Burwell. At the time the Continental bought the Donner Steel Company, Mr. Donner, who had run it for some years, made a condition of the sale that he should retire from the management. Mr. Girdler and Mr. Wysor were then associated with Continental Shares in and advisory way on the steel interests of Continental Shares, and they gave their attention to the operation of the Donner Steel Company.*

> Mr. Girdler. I never gave any attention to the operations of the Donner Co. except to answer questions and to advise anyone that asked me, such as people who owned Donner. I had no official connection with Donner.[74]

Tom Girdler, five years later, contradicted his own Senate testimony when *Boot Straps* was published. Girdler recounted the formation of Republic Steel as a corporation. He oversaw the activities that would bring the company together. He wrote that Republic was formed as the events of the Great Depression began to take hold of the country. He felt that it was a rough time to be starting a business venture. At the time, the future looked bleak for the country as far as economics were concerned. Certainly, the steel industry looked to be affected. So, when Girdler was arranging pieces to be assembled into a corporation he looked for the strongest available. One such piece was Donner Steel. Girdler wrote, "Another good company was the Donner Steel Company at Buffalo. Here was one of the few properties to be incorporated in Republic Steel Corporation which came to us from the hands of the original organizer and operator; although Donner Steel, too, was a flourishing growth on an old root. But Donner was an able steel man, one with a well-developed capacity to look ahead. Previously he had strengthened the Donner Company by adding to it the Witherow Steel Company of Pittsburgh. The important manufacturing asset this gave us was the Witherow patents for die rolling irregular steel objects direct from bars by means of cylindrical dies. Donner used to produce a wealth of automobile axles by that method. Today we have adapted it to the production of machine-gun barrels. We have been making them fast - three a second."[75] The preceding quote is long and technical and requires analysis.

To address Girdlers truthfulness, one must look at his testimony in conjunction with his writing. During senate testimony, Girdler stated that he had nothing to do with Donner Steel.

However, when addressing the formation of Republic Steel, Girdler indicated that he became familiar with Donner Steel to feel comfortable acquiring it as an asset. He also revealed that he knew its inner-workings intimately when he discussed the specifics of Donners patents. Girdler also implied that his business acumen was superb when he recognized Donner Steel as an advantageous acquisition during national economic disaster. Likewise, Girdler inflated the greatness of his creation, Republic Steel, when he described how they maximized production of machine gun barrels by using a process designed for another product: automobile axles. By inflating his company and categorizing his business tactics as clever, Girdler attempted to establish himself to be in total control of Republic Steel. The La Follette committee had to decide whether this was an accurate portrayal and representative of American industry. If it was, then that meant management was not only in charge of but responsible for the well-being of labor.

In one section of his Senate testimony, Girdler is shown to be one of the steel industries strongest opponents to unionization in its facilities. During the testimony, Girdler attempted to downplay this opposition. Other witnesses, the St. Louis Post Dispatch's reporter, Spencer McCulloch, testified to the contrary. McCulloch, wrote a profile of Girdler that was included in the Senate record that paints Girdler as a heavy-handed authoritarian.[76]

The committee may not have sought to prove Girdler to be dishonest, they were attempting to ascertain the condition of management practices toward labor, nonetheless, he was revealed to be less than truthful with them. A potential consequence of Girdler's testimony was that the La Follette committee saw industry as overly-harsh and inflexible with labor. After McCulloch's testimony and presentation of his profile, the was a lengthy dialogue between La Follette and Girdler about the accuracy of McCulloch's work. Girdler conceded that the article is

sourced properly but took issue with the conclusions the McCulloch seemed to draw that cast Girdler as an all-seeing and all-knowing manager whose employees respected and outside union organizers feared.

Girdler seems, again, to contradict his senate testimony within *Boot Straps*. In his autobiography girdler wrote of situations that McCulloch reported. One such situation involved Girdler's use of a private security force to protect his company's interests. In this case, the company was Jones & Laughlin. During his testimony, Girdler suggested that his security force was only used on company property to safeguard company assets. In Boot Straps, however, Girdler wrote, "The local police force began to raid the centers of vice and crime. Mauk (the commander of Jones & Laughlin's private security force) was their pal. If they thought they might need help Mauk would appear with a squad or two.[77] The private security force could not have been permitted to aid local police without Girdler's knowledge. Indeed, he was proud that his company could help local police in Aliquippa control the more unsavory activities that occurred in town. This was problematic for the La Follette committee. Girdler suggested that neither he, nor any of the steel companies that he led ever exercised influence over their employee's desires to join a union. It is implausible that that was the case. When Girdler allowed his security force to aid local police, it showed a level of control over not only his company but over town authorities as well. No employee could believe that their freedom of choice was not affected by the tentacles that Girdler's companies extended into their communities and private lives.

The La Follette committee went on to examine how agents of Republic tried to infiltrate union meetings, gain lists of union membership, and discourage employees from joining unions. This was all done to exert Republic's control over its labor force and to maximize profit. Girdler,

of course, denied that these tactics were used against his employees. But, again, he was contradicted. When examining the use of espionage against unions, one of Republic's police lieutenants, Frank Moore, gave testimony that revealed Republic Steel to employ these techniques in a widespread manner. Moore stated that his chief duty was "To patrol the plant and get all of the information that we possibly could from all employees on anything." Moore also explained that the company police force ordered patrolmen to attend local union meetings. This was done because the company wanted intelligence as to the activities of the union. They were looking for information that would suggest activities detrimental to the company's interests were taking place. They even went so far as to "tap the phones" used by employees.[78] Moore's testimony, up to this point, was crucial in describing the culture that existed throughout Republic un the 1930's. His testimony then moved from culture to practice.

Republic Steel experienced a strike in 1934 at its Buffalo facilities. Frank Moore described his involvement bellow:

> Senator La Follette. What were the responsibilities of the police department during the strike?
>
> Mr. Moore. To protect the company property. I suppose.
>
> Senator La Follette. Were any additional persons added to the police force during the strike?
>
> Mr. Moore. Yes
>
> Senator La Follette. How many?
>
> Mr. Moore. Do you mean outside additionals or inside additionals?
>
> Senator La Follette. Outside additionals.
>
> Mr. Moore. I am not positive, because that was really the beginning of the police force, just before that.

Senator La Follette. Do you mean the police force at Donner?

Mr. Moore. Yes, they had no regular amount.

Senator La Follette. What did the men who were imported do?

Mr. Moore. Broke up the picket line.

Senator La Follette. What did the local men do?

Mr. Moore. Protect the inside of the plant.

Senator La Follette. Why did they select local men to protect the inside and imported men to work on the outside? If you know.

Mr. Moore. So the outsiders would not know them.

The practices used by Republic Steel when dealing with strikes led directly to the deaths of Bogovich and Eperjesi. Republic under the leadership of Tom Girdler set up a culture that was paternalistic and controlled exclusively by management. When labor attempted to organize to improve their situation, Republic responded by undermining their efforts inside and outside of their facilities. They infiltrated union gatherings and collected information to use against organization. When labor exhausted all other options, and called a strike, Republic met that tactic with security that used physical force to end the resistance.

The U.S. Senate clearly believed that industries were taking advantage of their workforces. So, La Follette was tasked with getting the truth of industries' abuses on record. Their work concerning Republic Steel and Tom Girdler did just that. Republic would become analogous with American industry and Girdler became the personification of intractable management bodies. With rulings from the National Labor Relations Board and testimony from

the U.S. Senate Committee on Education and Labor as ammunition, Senator Robert La Follette, introduced Senate Bill 1970 or the Oppressive Labor Practices Act (OLPA). This bill "prohibited industrial espionage, strikebreaking, the purchase and use of military-like armaments, and the employment of private armed guards beyond their own premises"[79] The deaths of John Bogovich and James Eperjesi were caused by all the items which the OLPA outlawed. The La Follette committee looked at several industries and management personalities but, given the strictures of the OLPA it can be inferred that American labor law was changed because of Republic Steel and Tom Girdler.

Conclusion

Two federal bodies, The National Labor Relations Board and The Supreme Court of the United States both released decisions that condemned the labor practices of Republic Steel during the 1930's. First, in 1937, The Supreme Court found the Wagner Act to be constitutional. The CIO and SWOC based most of their organizing strategy on the rights afforded to them by the Wagner Act.[80] This decision granted legitimacy to labor unions across the country and served as a threat to the business practices of companies like Republic Steel. Then, in 1939 the NLRB found that Republic Steel operated in a manner that violated the National Labor Relations Act by using intimidation tactics and dismissing employees who tried to organize. Under the power granted to it by the NLRA the NLRB ordered Republic Steel to compensate employees financially whom they wronged. Further, the NLRB ordered that workers be allowed to unionize without molestation and that workers fired for union affiliation be re-hired. Additionally, Republic steel had to report to the NLRB the steps it took to implement their orders.[81] Against the backdrop of Roosevelt's New Deal era, federal entities began to make policy and decisions

that took power from corporations and placed some in the hands of the working class. Labor organizations took full advantage of the changing climate. Some corporations resisted the winds of change. When resistance was strong, labor and management clashed, sometimes violently. Republic Steel, led by one of the most ardent opponents of labor rights, Tom Girdler, applied philosophies and tactics to crush the labor movement at its facilities, as evidenced in Youngstown, Ohio.

The reasons for violence on June 19th, 1937 are difficult to tie down in the micro. For instance, whether the police were justified in resorting to lethal violence when they did is difficult to judge from the evidence available. Accounts vary as to the levels of danger law enforcement officers were in. Judging the behavior of the female strikers and their motivations is also difficult because of the difference in narratives that described their evening. In the macro, however, the actions of all parties can be interpreted more fully. For labor, a new era was emerging. This era promised greater influence in decision making and supposed better working conditions, pay, and hours. For management, the new era portended an end to its dominance and control of business. When management's fears of the future clashed with labor's hope, confrontation was inevitable. The degree to which that confrontation escalated was dependent upon the commitment that both sides gave to their ideals. In Youngstown, during the summer of 1937, those commitments ran deep.

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